

# History of Crowan Parish Church



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# INTRODUCTION

By Reverend Robert F Law

In the islands of Britain during the forgotten labyrinths of history there flourished a church founded without martyrs. This was made possible because it was a church grafted on to the Druidic stock which held many beliefs similar to Celtic Christianity including life after death. The Druids were also familiar with "soul friends" who were counsellors to young monks and converts who needed encouragement and wise counsel although they did not have the divine authority to absolve sins. It was natural that the Christians who evangelised these islands took over many of the Druidic practices without too many problems and also established their churches on or near to the ancient cultic sites. This made good sense psychologically because it was the place the people were used to visiting. Saint Augustine later confirmed this when he instructed his monks "to build their churches on the old cultic sites so that if the locals sacrificed their cats on the Saturday night then they can clean up before Mass on the Sunday morning."

Another more practical reason for using the old sites was that they were often near a well or a spring and fresh clean water was essential to the well-being of any community. Crowan's water supply came from the spring which gushes out of the hillside at Bolankan. One possible meaning of the word could be "the dwelling place by the little monastic enclosure" (Bo from bos — homestead or dwelling; lan, similar to the Welsh llan — church or monastic enclosure; and kan being the diminutive). Nearly all these wells and springs were named after or dedicated to the local tribal deity especially the goddess Anu. Later these were christianised in favour of the local saint or Anne who was the mother of the Virgin Mary. It is also about this time that "well dressing" began in which biblical scenes were produced by pressing flower petals into frames of wet clay.

These ancient sites were also visited by those who desired to find some spiritual dimension to their lives away from home. This comes partly from the belief that a person's strength comes from the place where his god and roots are, and today there are a number of manifestations of this. Here in Cornwall where mining has been a way of life for centuries, people have taken their skills up country and overseas when work failed here. Crowan has had many sons emigrate to Africa, America and Australia, and their descendants are often seen walking around our church looking for family names or just quietly drinking in the atmosphere of "home".

The labyrinths of history are not closed and the church founded without martyrs flourishes yet in these islands. Crowan is a living community and we are trying to hand on to those who will follow us a church which is welcoming to its sons and daughters while at the same time is faithful to our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is hoped that we shall soon be draught-proofing the tower and the south door which will mean moving the font, yet again, to a position in the oldest part of the church, the north aisle. A new heating system is also to be installed which will improve upon the overhead heaters in current use. The bell-ringers have suggested that the bells need rehanging on roller bearings in order that they may continue to call the faithful and the not-so-faithful to worship. In these days some of you may say that such things are not necessary, but recently our bells were heard in Adelaide, Australia, by the wife of one of our "sons" who had returned "home" to seek his family roots. This was all achieved through the public telephone link which stands outside the church next to the vestry room.

Throughout history, Crowan has waxed and waned as populations have been forced to move away or have been attracted to this beautiful jewel in the western corner of Cornwall. The church has seen similar fluctuations in strength. At the moment, against the national trends, if the newspapers are to be believed, we are experiencing a revival. Our Sunday School has just over 30 children and the adult congregation has not been so numerous for many a decade. This is due in part to the growth of Praze, our main village in the parish, but also to sensitive leadership within the church itself.

We hope that you have enjoyed this short footnote to the history, and that you will help us with your prayers and generosity to preserve Crowan for future pilgrims who make the journey to their ancestral home.

I set my little ship to sea  
Let thine eye Lord be over me  
My little craft upon the brine  
Keep me Lord for I am thine.

This day dear Lord with me go  
If life ebb or if it flow  
This day dear Lord be with me  
On firm ground, in the air or all at sea.

## FOREWORD

Canon Doble's scholarly booklet "A History of the Parish of Crowan" is now unfortunately out of print and almost unobtainable, and, in any case, is over fifty years old. There has been considerable pressure from visitors and parishioners for a new booklet on the church, as well as my personal feeling that "something should be done about it", and so this little book is offered pending the issue of a better one. I have taken much information from Canon Doble's book as well as from Lake's "Parochial History" and Polwhele's "History of Cornwall", and have received much help from the County Record Office at Truro and from Mr David Thomas in particular.

Photographs of the church as it is today and as it was in about 1910 and 1860 are available for inspection at the church. We are indebted to the County Museum at Truro for being allowed to reproduce the older photographs from copies which they hold. All line drawings of these photographs used herein have been made by Mr C Spittlehouse.

My apologies in advance for any errors that may have escaped the teachers' eyes of my wife and myself. I can only hope that this account may make our lovely church as well loved to you, the reader, as it is to me, the writer.

Alf Ridgewell, 1990

# A HISTORY OF CROWAN CHURCH

## EARLY DAYS

The origins of our dearly-loved church have been lost in the passage of time, but we think that an oratory of some kind must have been built on the site of the present church over 1400 years ago. All we have are the legends so beloved of Celtic peoples which were handed down from generation to generation, modified and embellished as the centuries passed.

Scientific proof and authentic records there are none, but our belief is that in common with many other early saints in Cornwall, Crewenna together with people like Breaca and Ia, brought Christianity to SW Cornwall in the very early days. In terms of national fame, St Crewenna like St Materiana of Tintagel, is virtually unknown outside her own parish, but here in Crowan she is deeply rooted in our religious observances, and respected as the bringer of the Gospel to our parish. Her anniversary or Feast is still celebrated in the Anglican and Methodist churches on the nearest Sunday to Candlemas Eve (1st February). There is one reference to Sanctus Crewennus in historical records but all other early historians write of Sancta Crewenna. Hence she is represented in our Memorial Window as a gracious lady. Her faith must have been very great indeed for in those early days life must have been quite difficult for everybody but even harder for one bringing a new religion to upset the existing order of society.

## NORMAN TIMES TO 1539

The first reference to Crowan was in the 12th century in a document dated not later than AD 1147 when it appeared as Eggloscraweyn. In 1201 it had become the "church of Saint Crewan" and in 1269 it was Sancta Crewenna. This became Scynt Crewyn in 1432. A reference to the saint is to be found in some articles copied by John Leland in the reign of Henry VIII. He spent some time in Breage in 1538 and says "...Brecca came to Cornwall from Ireland with many saints among whom were Crewanna and Helena". As this refers to events a thousand years before, it cannot be considered as indubitable fact! No other records of Crewenna have been found here or elsewhere in Cornwall. There is a parish in Brittany called Crozon (locally pronounced Craon) but the connection is somewhat uncertain even though the tradition there is that Crewenna visited the area.

At the time of the Norman Conquest it would appear that Crowan was taxed under the jurisdiction of Lannigell (St Michael's Mount). Hals states that in 1294 Ecclesia de Crowan in Diccanatu de Penwith was rated "viii livres". By this time, Crowan, as part of the manor of Connerton, had become part of the property of the Bridgwater Priory of St James of Bristol which in its turn

was part of the Abbey of Tewkesbury. From 1238 until the Dissolution of the Monasteries Tewkesbury appointed the priests of Crowan.

The first recorded appointment was Benedict in 1238 and he was succeeded by Deodatus in 1241. By 1244, the vicar had been assigned all altar offerings and sanctuary and half the hay tithe, but Tewkesbury had reserved the right of a "competent area near the church to build their barns". By this time the parish seems to have had well-defined boundaries within which each habitation paid its tithes to Tewkesbury, part of which went to the vicar or "Representative" as his stipend. The vicar could have one or more curates to help him, and for many years it was not uncommon for a vicar to have more than one parish. He would appoint a curate in each parish and usually he himself would live in the wealthiest or most comfortable parish. It is not surprising that under these conditions many parishes were poorly cared for.

According to Tregellas "The St Aubyns of Clowance and the Mount", it was Guy St Aubyn who married Eleanor Knoville who first brought the St Aubyns from Somerset to Cornwall. It was Geoffrey, his grandson, who married Elizabeth Kymyell of Clowance and thus established the Crowan connection. Diana Hartley in her carefully researched book on the "St Aubyns of Cornwall" quotes the latter marriage but not the first, but it is fairly certain that it was at this stage that the close connection of the St Aubyn family with Crowan began.

By 1426 Geoffrey St Aubyn and his son Geoffrey were farming the tithes of Crowan and St Wenn at a rent of £26. In 1451 Crowan was rented at £13 and Geoffrey was allowed four shillings and four pence for the repair of two glass windows in the chancel. The size and plan of the church at this time are not known.

In 1477 the Archdeacon (of Exeter?) found very serious defects in the building and in the books, and appointed sequestrators and ordered the Abbot of Tewkesbury to appear before him by proxy in the Chapel of St Mary of Deverel (Cwinne).

## 1539 TO THE RESTORATION IN 1872

In 1539 together with other Catholic Abbeys, the Abbey of Tewkesbury was suppressed and it and all its lands fell to the Crown. The patronage of Crowan was purchased from Henry VIII by Thomas Seyntaubyn Esq, Sheriff of Cornwall, in 1546. At this time it was reported that Crowan was quite a wealthy parish and possessed many articles of silver. The St Aubyn Family kept the patronage of the church until 1989 when it was passed to Mr D L C Roberts of Fernside, Praze, who shortly afterwards was to be elected Chairman of Cornwall County Council. In Tudor and Stuart times, and indeed for long afterwards, the St Aubyns were very influential in Cornwall and Devon. Thomas was Sheriff of Cornwall in 1546, Thomas in 1588, John in 1636 and John in 1673.

It is suggested that there was at one time a south transept where the vestry is now and before the present south aisle was built. In 1666, a commission was

appointed to decide on the seating in the church on the authority of Seth, Bishop of Exeter, because of some disquiet among the congregation as to who should sit where. It consisted of Henry Seyntaubyn (vicar), John Seyntaubyn, John Seyntaubyn, William Orchard, Rich Fowler, Rich Fowler (junr), Richard Tregeare (? the same whose headstone is in the Tower Vestry), J W Rogers, John Hoaisne and W Coath (churchwardens). The commission assigned each person to a particular seat, men together and women together. There was a north door and a south door and the font was in the centre of the church. (See Appendix D).

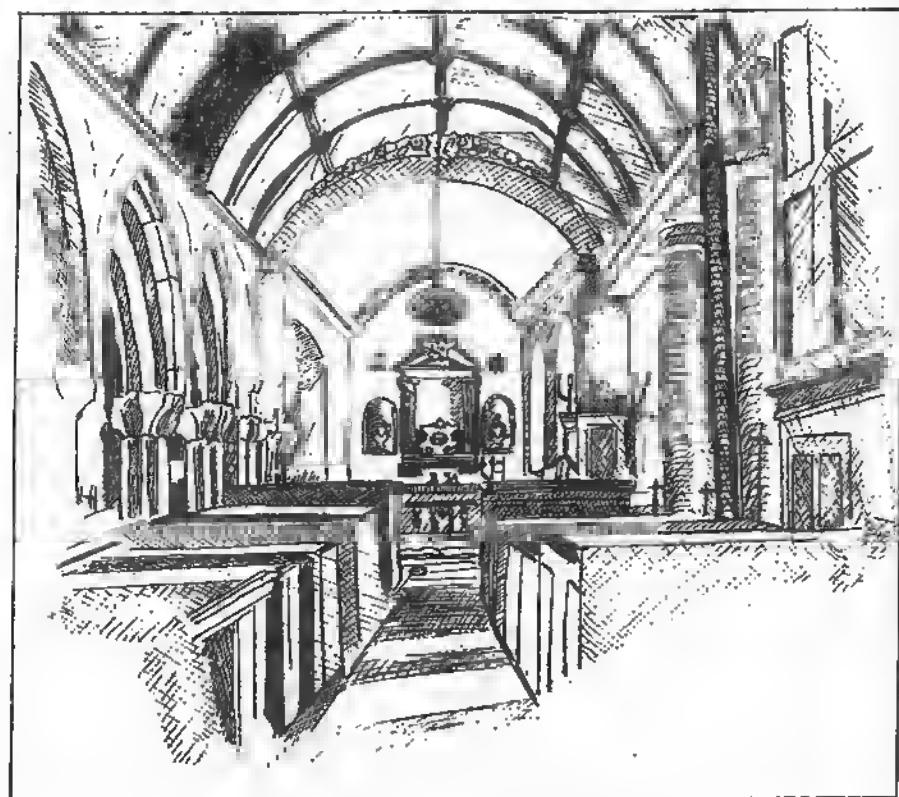
In 1745 Ebenezer (Ezekiell) Williams reported to the Bishop of Exeter (since Cornwall was part of that diocese until the Diocese of Truro was formed in 1877) "...there are 140 families in Crowan Parish and one man calls himself a Quaker. I reside on my cure. There are 200 communicants and at Easter 100 received". In the same year John Wesley preached at Crowan. By 1812 the communicants had dropped to 25 under a vicar who held more than one parish and did not live in Crowan. On this occasion a report states that "One Methodist Meeting House School at the expense of Sir John St Aubyn and educating 200 boys on the Dr Bell's system. There are 742 families". (Note. This seems a very large increase in the number of families in the 67 years between the two dates). In 1821 there was a Sunday School of 80 boys and 70 girls at the church, and another for 100 boys and girls run by the Methodists. There was also a Daily School for 120 boys supported entirely by Sir John, and one for 80 girls supported partly by subscription. Communion was held only 5 times during the year ("...last four attendances 7, 11, 26 and 47, and collections were 1/10½, 2/4½, 5/-, and 10/6"). Just before this date there were reports of very bad conditions "...very small doors, clock doesn't work, vicarage roof leaks, small churchyard and bodies in graves being pulled up before they were decomposed and the stench is insufferable". Obviously the church was going through a very bad time.

In the County Record Office in Truro there is a small notebook dealing with the day schools. At the back of the book is an undated statement:-  
 "Size of Girls' School 40 x 23 x 13 — 147 girls  
 Size of Boys' School 54 x 32 x 13 — 277 boys"  
 Dimensions would be in feet but conditions must have been rather difficult. In 1864 the accounts showed for the Girls' School

School	10	10	8	Mistress' Salary	31	10	0
Grant (Privy Council)	15	13	8	Bastin & Cook	12	0	0
Rev St Aubyn	10	0	0	Books	1	0	0
Duke of Leeds	3	3	0	Coals	1	18	0
Lord Churston	2	2	0	Mr Richards (sundries)	1	3	0
Major Grylls	1	1	0	Repairs		10	0
J W Johns	5	0	0	Tca Treat	2	0	0
J W Johns	2	10	8				
	£50	1	0		£50	1	0

With the arrival of the Rev J W Johns as vicar in 1844, much effort was put into improving the condition of the church.

The plan of the church prior to 1831 which is in the Vicar's Vestry, shows the present outline of the church but with the porch and entry half way along the south aisle, and an area at the south-east end of the church where the present Vicar's Vestry is situated. At the east end there was no window in either the chancel or the north aisle. Inside the church there was a gallery from the west wall stretching across the church where the organ and choir were installed, boys on the north side and girls on the south. The roof of the south side was supported by four circular columns unlike the north aisle with its old arches. The pulpit was in approximately the same position as it is today although it was replaced later. The font was near the tower but well into the church just south of



Church interior about 1860

Note 2 windows south of the altar

2 pillars on south aisle

Tall chimney from stove to roof

No window but marble memorial east end.

the north aisle. Box pews were allocated to the families of Binner, Trethannas, Drym, Trenoweth and Gew, Tregear, Halgarrack, Polcrebo and Bolankan, Vicarage, Trevoole and Crenver. Clowance pew and pews for male servants and female servants were near to the chancel. A tomb enclosed by railings was against the east wall of the north aisle but this was probably a different tomb from the one in the church at present. The etching of 1801 shown in Polwhele's "History of Cornwall" shows a longer and lower tomb. The gallery was taken down and the tower opened about 1860. It is interesting to note that on this plan "a roadway to Tremayne and Cargenwen" in the north-west corner is shown, whatever may have been meant by a roadway in those days. A vestry room is shown in the front S W corner of the churchyard.

In the plan previous to 1870 there are some changes. The general shape of the church is unchanged but the font has been moved to be just inside the south door and between it and the west wall there is a vestry. The four columns on the south aisle have been reduced to two central columns. The gallery along the west wall has been replaced by one along the south wall. There are two tombs in the north-east corner of the church, and it would appear that a lectern has been introduced. A stove is near the centre of the church and it has a tall chimney up to the roof as seen in the line drawing of the interior based on a photograph taken I believe about 1860. Also one of the windows in the north wall at the eastern end has disappeared possibly to have one of the marble monuments placed there. The blocked-in section can be seen on the outside of the church near the date 1746. At this time there were two large windows in the south wall of the chancel to give light to the altar area.

## THE RESTORATION 1872 TO THE PRESENT DAY

By 1860 quite a lot of interior work had been done but in January 1862 a Committee for the Restoration of the Church was formed. It consisted of:- Sir A H Molesworth St Aubyn, John Abrahams (churchwarden), T B Paynter (curate), Philip Richards, Thomas Hill, J W Johns (vicar), and William Williams. Sarah and Edwards were the builders concerned and J Piers St Aubyn the architect. An appeal was made for funds for the project and an estimate obtained. A licence for the Girls' School to be used for services during the restoration was given by Frederick, Bishop of Exeter, on 14 April 1871. Almost all the interior furniture was replaced. It was during this restoration that the system of heating seen along the north and south aisles was put in place to replace the central stove and tall chimney shown on the pre-1870 plan. An entry for £50 for heating apparatus will be seen in the 1874 Balance Sheet in Appendix A. This system continued in use until the installation of overhead heating in 1972. When the wind was in the wrong direction, services could be quite smoky occasions. Also at this time the two circular columns supporting the roof must have been replaced by the present arches to balance the much older ones in the north aisle. The church was re-opened for services on St James' Day, 25 July 1872. Details are to be seen on the north wall at the west end.

It was during the last decades of the 19th century that a number of beautifying and useful gifts were made to the church. The present reredos was the gift of the architect and replaced the marble monument that today forms the frame around the slate that gives the details of the restoration, on the north wall. The richly worked altar cloths were the gift of Miss Gregory. Most of the stained glass windows came during this period. These are detailed in a later section. The organ was built by Messrs Brewer & Sons of Truro in 1891; the Vestry in 1890; the porch in memory of J W Johns.

The bells and the tower are worthy of a separate paragraph. The peal originally consisted of 6 bells cast by Abraham Ruddhall of Gloucester in 1729, engraved as follows:

Tenor	"I to the church the living call, And to the grave do summon all"	12 cwt
VII	"Prosperity to the Church of England"	9 cwt
VI	"Abraham Ruddhall"	7 cwt
V	"Peace and Good Neighbourhood"	6 cwt
IV	"Prosperity to this Parish"	5 cwt
III	"1729"	4½ cwt

The last two bells were installed in 1939 and donated by the Barron Bell Trust · and by Mr J Sarah Roberts of Fernside, Praze.

II	"To the Glory of God"	3½ cwt
I	"To the Glory of God"	2 cwt

By 1880, the condition of the tower and the six bells was causing considerable concern. Estimates for repair were sought and Mr H Stokes of Woodbury near Exeter stated in his 1½ foolscap pages of report on 12 March 1891 that repair was virtually impossible for the frames, and that replacement was necessary. By 1896 the work was undertaken and despite the passage of five years, the price had remained constant:

April and May 1896. For taking out old fittings and frame from Crowan Church Tower and providing and fixing in the tower a new English oak frame for the 6 bells and hanging the 6 bells with all new fittings complete according to the estimate of	£81	17	0
12 March 1891. For taking out the old floor and beams from the tower and providing and fixing in the tower 3 new English oak beams and one wall plate and laying floor on same	10	2	0
Supplying 6 new bell ropes each 70' long at 11/10 each	3	11	0
			<hr/>
			£95 10 0

The tower has a stone spiral staircase up to the roof from the vestry, by-passing the bell ringers' chamber to the clock chamber, the bell chamber and thence to the roof which is about 70 feet above ground level. In the bell ringers' chamber is a painting on wood which is reported to be associated with the funeral of Sir John, the 5th Baronet, whose body was brought from Putney on 17 August 1839 to Clowance on 26 August.

The present clock is to the memory of Rev St Aubyn Hender Molesworth St Aubyn, 12th Baronet of Pencarrow, who died in 1913. It was installed in 1921.

Towards the end of the 19th century a change in church organisation occurred. On 16 April 1891, the Crowan Church Council was formed at a general meeting of members of the congregation and it had its first meeting a week later on 23 April. The heading of the book of Minutes reads "Crowan Church Parochial Council 1891. Minutes of the Council and of the Easter Vestry subsequent to the formation of the Parish Council's Act". "The object is to advise the Vicar and Churchwardens on all matters not being ministerial or doctrinal pertaining to the work of the church and the well-being of the parish". The constitution of the council was "(a) ex officio members being the clergy; Lay Representative; churchwardens and sidesmen: (b) 5 elected members, 2 male and 3 female, with power to add to their number". The first elected members were Miss M St Aubyn, Mrs Berryman, Miss J Trevenen, Mr Eva and Mr Foote. Early items of business included an extension to the churchyard and a request for reports on the condition of the bells and the tower from Warner & Sons of London, Messrs Mears & Stainbank of Whitechapel and Mr Harry Stokes of Exeter with the results mentioned in a previous paragraph. At this time the Rev Rowland de Cerjat was vicar.

At the October meeting 1891, the vicar announced that he had this day (22 October) received notice from the Postal Telegraph Dept that a Telegraph Office would before long be placed in Praze in accordance with his requests recently made. Some extracts from the minutes of subsequent meetings are as follows:

2 Dec 1891	James Hart's tender for building the new hedge for the churchyard extension at 8 shillings per lace be accepted and that of Messrs Kitto and Evans for building the wall at 2 shillings and 3 pence per perch be also accepted
20 Jan 1892	Organ-blower's salary fixed at 52 shillings a year and "he should be expected to blow at every service on Sunday and not more than 2 week-day services".
4 May 1892	Census figures for the parish 1891 — 1,124 males and 1,344 females; 2,468 persons. In 1881 — 2,593 persons.
19 May 1892	As church expenses are very heavy it was decided to assign districts to different persons for collecting subscriptions. (Note: "heavy church expenses" seems quite familiar to this treasurer in 1990!).

5 Sept 1893	A small committee of Leedstown parishioners to be appointed to arrange the general and financial affairs of the Mission Chapel. St James's Church, Leedstown, had been built, opened, and dedicated by Bishop Benson in 1882.
4 Oct 1897	"...desirable to obtain Mr St Aubyn's permission to make the Clowance seats in the church moveable in order that the north east corner might be converted into a side chapel for daily services".
25 Oct 1899	Beginning 1 November, choirboys be paid one penny for every attendance, and be fined ½ penny if absent without leave.
7 May 1903	"...the vicar hoped to place a chiming apparatus in the belfry as a thanks offering and to give the work to Mr Stokes of Exeter."
18 April 1906	In the financial statement at the Annual Meeting — "Insurance Crowan Church £1 10s. 6d.; St James 12s."
22 April 1908	"...that the thanks of the Vestry be given to the members of the St Aubyn family for their magnificent gift of the east window in the past year."
(Note —	According to the records available, it would appear that during Canon Adams' incumbency there were no church council meetings but only Annual Meetings and Easter Vestry).
15 April 1914	It was agreed to increase the salary of the organist, Mr Ursell, to £20 p.a. (Many members of the church will remember Mr Ursell who continued to be organist intermittently until 1977). Two new bells for the church — Mr J Carab Roberts has offered £100 and the Barron Bell Trust £162 towards the cost of two new bells. Agreed to apply for a faculty. (Approval by Diocesan authority).
6 Aug 1939	Miss Carab left £100 to Diocesan Trustees for upkeep of the grave and £150 to the Vicar and Churchwardens for upkeep of the interior of the church, two silver candlesticks to the church and one silver salver to Truro Cathedral or to the church at the discretion of the Bishop.
4 April 1949	Organ overhaul initiated (Final bill of £506 paid by instalments to Hele & Co., Saltash).
20 Jan 1953	Supply and Maintenance of the Ministry Fund (Quota or Common Fund) required from Crowan £114 18s. 0d. (Today our Common Fund is more than £5,000).
11 Oct 1954	The St Creweina Players formed (Amateur Dramatic Society for fund raising). Tower Fund opened to raise over £600 for tower repairs.
5 Feb 1956	Work on a voluntary basis to deal with dry rot in the north aisle.
25 May 1958	Offer of £100 to buy the "Church Hall" (the old Girls' School) from the Diocesan Board of Education. (Ultimately the house and the hall were sold to the occupant).
3 March 1968	Installation of overhead heating completed.
12 Nov 1972	

29 April 1974 Reported that the lightning conductor had been installed.  
 7 March 1977 Details of Truro centenary celebrations.  
 20 May 1980 The ashes of Rev Charles Turpie were the first to be interred in the Garden of Remembrance to the east of the entry gate.  
 26 July 1985 Re-wiring of the church completed.

According to church records, electricity was installed in 1950.

In recent years as a result of increased costs and smaller numbers of applicants to join the priesthood, the Church of England authorities had to ask some priests to look after more than one parish. Sometimes two or more parishes were amalgamated and became a joint parish, and sometimes the parishes maintained their independent unity and the priest became responsible for a joint benefice.

On 24 February 1981, an Order in Council was published in the London Gazette in pursuance of the Pastoral Measure of 1968 whereby:-

1. The benefice of St Bartholomew, Porthleven, and the benefice of Sithney, shall be united to form the benefice of Porthleven with Sithney.

2. The benefice of Crowan and the benefice of Godolphin shall be united to create the new benefice of Crowan with Godolphin, the area to coincide with the area of the two parishes, and the parishes to continue distinct; the parsonage of Crowan to be the place of residence of the incumbent of the new benefice. The right of presentation to the benefice shall be exercised alternately by the Bishop of Truro and Sir John Molesworth St Aubyn of Washaway, the latter having the first turn.

Nowadays the church organisation has become much more oriented towards lay participation. In the services, members of the congregation including the children in the Sunday School, are actively engaged in readings, prayers and songs. The church building is used for concerts especially by Male Voice Choirs, whilst Crowan County Primary School has used the church for Christmas concerts.

In finance, the lay have had to find an ever increasing sum to help cover the cost of insurance, help meet the vicar's stipend and the cost of pensions to the diocese and the Church Commissioners, so that fund raising either by direct contributions or by special efforts takes up a considerable amount of energy and time. In this connection special mention should be made of the two Flower Festivals held in 1981 and 1988 which not only raised necessary cash but also beautified the church so wonderfully and brought so many people to our place of worship.

A new churchyard area will be opened and there are plans to improve the draught-proofing of the church which will probably involve moving the font to a position in the north aisle, and also to improve the heating facilities. Some of these may be regarded as superficial arrangements but if they help to bring more and more people to public worship and to bring Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit more and more actively into our lives then the trouble and expense will be more than justified.

## SPECIAL FEATURES OF THE CHURCH

Little is known of the size and shape of the original church. What kind of building existed, if any, before Norman times is conjecture. Presumably some sort of structure such as an oratory would have existed and certainly there was an excellent supply of fresh water nearby at Bolankan and such a supply was always a necessity for all the old religious settlements. Ancient chapels have existed in the parish area e.g. Binnerton, Kerthen, Treverike, Clowance and Helligan, but information about them is 13th century or later.

Canon Doble's book refers to the existence of a Norman church but that the only relics of it are the two rather strange corbel heads which crown the buttresses at the western end of the north aisle and one stone used as a quoin at



the south-east angle of the chancel. He also states that the plain square font is Norman with the base made of granite showing four crudely carved animals and dating from 15th century. He reports that the north aisle was added by the St Aubyns in the middle of the 15th century but we do not know to what it was added. On this side of the church there are seven ancient arches although originally there were six. The westernmost one was altered when the tower was built about 1500 and the two eastern-most were modified to three smaller ones when a rood screen was constructed. The capitals of these arches have angels with shields carved in the granite. Some are plain, some carry the arms of the St Aubyns (a cross and 5 besants), some Kemyell (3 dolphins), and some 3 saws



KEMYELL



GODOLPHIN

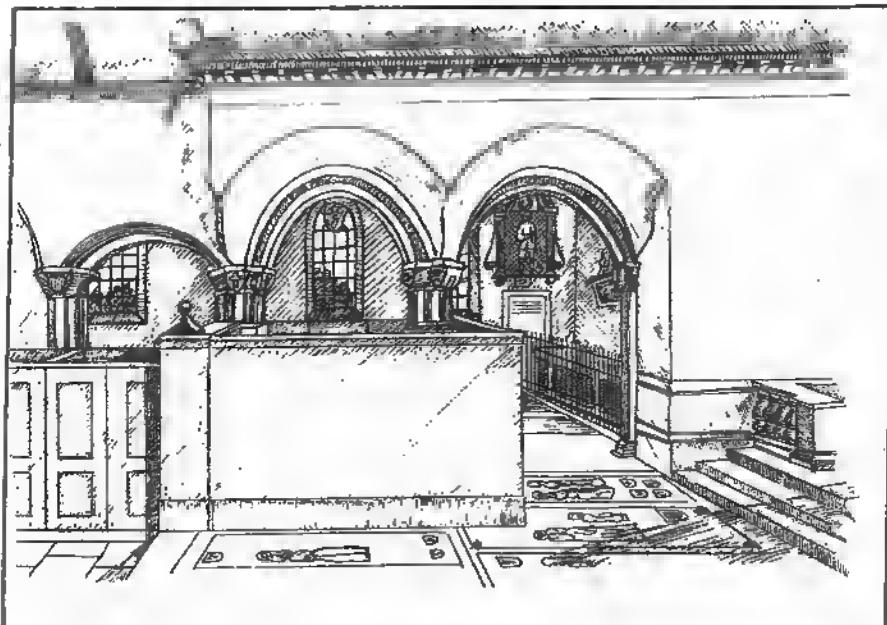


ST. AUBYN

for the arms of Bray or 3 reaphooks for the arms of Tremere. Many of the gentry families of the south-west inter-married during the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries.

In the north wall there is a stone staircase which led to the Rood Loft and two stone brackets on the south side of the arches may have helped to support the loft.

There are a number of brasses in the church, mostly in the north aisle on the walls near the Lady Chapel altar or mounted on wood usually near the tomb. They all refer to the St Aubyn family. Polwhele's "History of Cornwall" which was published in 1803-1808 shows etchings of six brasses which appeared to be in excellent condition. An etching of the chancel shows some of



The chancel about 1800

*The box pew is the Clowance pew.*

*Note brasses on floor and windows in North wall.*

the brasses on the floor. However, by the time that E H Dunkin published his book on "Monumental Brasses of Cornwall" in 1878 they were in a bad state and he quotes the brasses as follows:-

- "1. Geoffrey Seyntaubyn engraved about 1420 removed from the church in 1859.
2. Geoffrey Seyntaubyn and wife about 1490. Prior to the removal of brasses to Clowance in 1859 this was on the floor of the chancel.

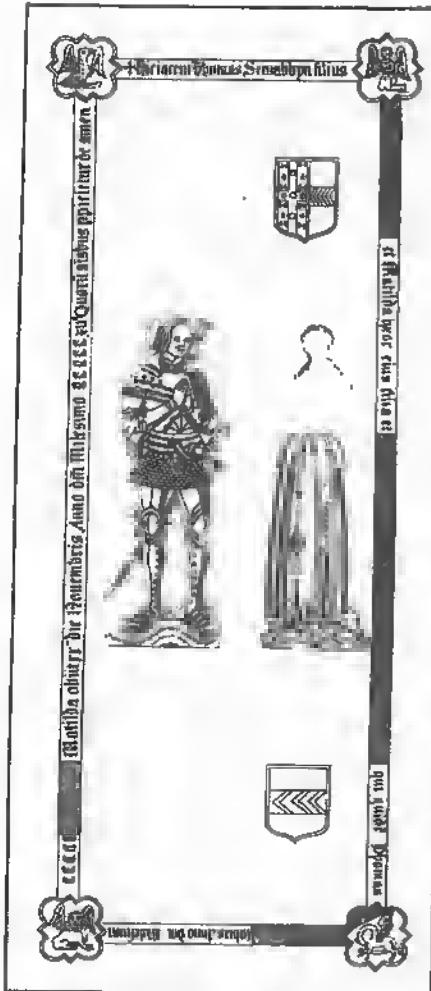
3. Thomas Scintaubin and wife about 1550 — fragments preserved at Clowance.
4. John St Aubyn 1599 — fragments preserved at Clowance.
5. Group of boys — from the brass of John St Aubyn.
6. Group of girls — four daughters from the brass of Thomas St Aubyn who died in 1626. Originally there were five but a vandal has filed off a strip of brass on the left hand side."



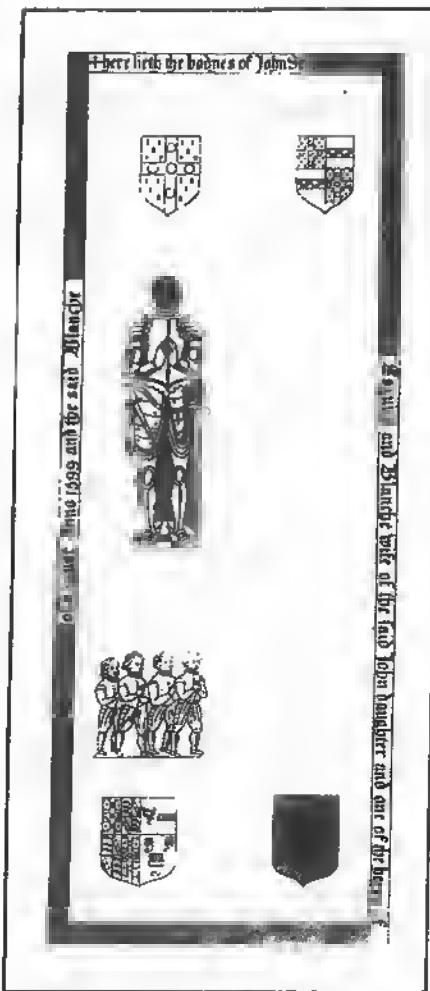
Geffry St. Aubyn and Elizabeth his wife, daughter and heiress of Pier Kymyell of Clowance. About 1400



Geffry St. Aubyn of Clowance and his wife Alice, daughter and co-heiress of John Tremere. About 1490



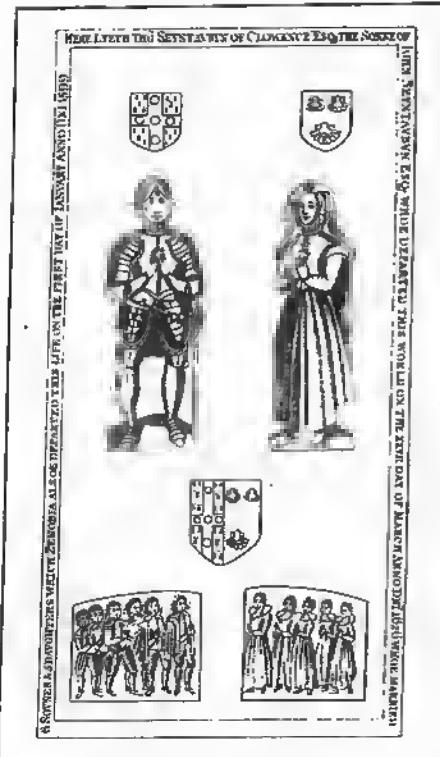
Thomas St. Aubyn of Clowance Esq. and his wife Matilda, second daughter and co-heiress of John Trenowith of Fentongoleth in Cornwall. About 1550



John St. Aubyn of Clowance and Blanch, his wife, daughter and heiress of Thomas Whittington. About 1599

The brasses in the church are all part of the original brasses, and photocopies of the brasses as shown in Polwhele's "History of Cornwall" are available in the church.

If Polwhele's etchings are accurate, and there is no reason to believe otherwise, it is a great shame that posterity has been deprived of these beautiful examples of the craftsmen's art.



Thomas St. Aubyn of Clowance Esq. and his wife Zenobia, daughter of John Mallet of Wooley in Devonshire Esq. About 1626

Engravings of these brasses are said (Kelly) to be in Polwhele's History of Cornwall and it is stated that these brasses were removed to a place of safety till it shd. be convenient to restore and replace them (where are they? WG) Vicars — Ralph Treloby 1536 John Glynn 1699."

The large tomb which has been moved from time to time is that of Sir John St Aubyn who died in 1714. Many of the St Aubyn family have been buried at Crowan. Until the restoration in 1871/2 there was a mausoleum just to the north of the church for the St Aubyn family but it was taken down at that time and today there is only a vault there.

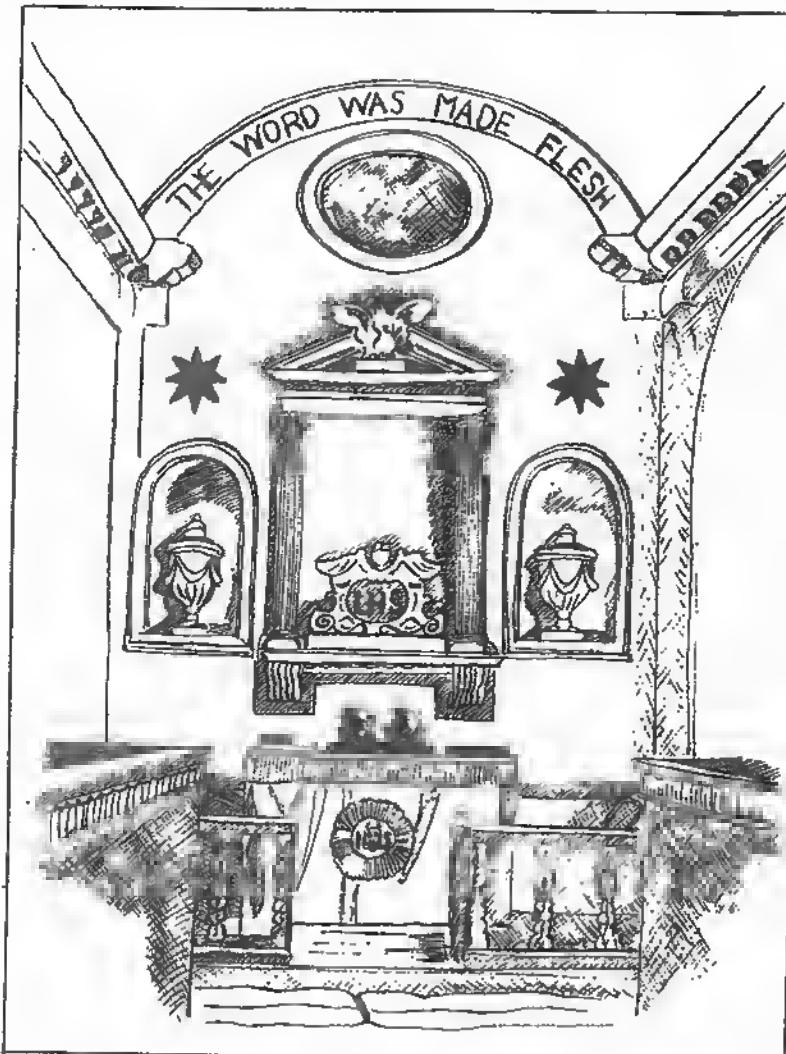
Near the tomb is a tablet on the wall (listing the vicars of Crowan since 1238) in memory of Rev Herbert Skewes who died shortly after he retired in 1953.

The following is a copy of an unsigned and undated letter held in the Record Office in Truro.

"Brasses formerly in Crowan Church.

1. In the memory of Geffry St Aubyn who married Elizabeth daur and heiress of Pier Kymyel of Clowance; they died about AD 1400 (on all the caps. of the pillars of the N. arcade and over the priest's door on the outside are carved the arms of St Aubyn impaling Kymyel).
2. Hic jacent Galfridus Seyntaubyn et Alicia uxor ejus filia et heres Jobannes (sic) Tremure de launivet, Armigeri, qui quidem Galfridus obiit tertio (die) mensis Octobris, Anno Domini Millimo CCCC° — animabus propicietur deus, Amen. Jhu mercy — lady help.
3. To the memory of Tho' Seyntaubyn (1626) and Zenobia (Mallet) his wife (1599).
4. Thomas Seyntaubyn and Matilda (Trenowith) 1512.
5. Thomas Seyntaubyn and Mary (Grenville).
6. John Seyntaubyn and Blanch (Whittington). He died 1599. Four sons were represented thereon.

On the north wall there are a number of memorials and tablets mostly to members of the St Aubyn family. At the east end there is one to Sir John, born 17 May 1758 and died 10 August 1839, whilst in the central area there is an even more elaborate monument to another Sir John born 12 November 1726 and died 12 October 1772. Lake, in his "Parochial History of Cornwall", refers to "... a handsome marble monument without inscription" which occupies the



East wall about 1860  
Note marble memorial, alcoves and urns.

place of the chancel window i.e. the East Window. Apparently the east end of the church was rebuilt in 1746 when both the east windows in the north aisle and the chancel were blocked. This situation continued until the restoration in 1872 when this marble monument was moved and placed at the west end of the north aisle, and some details of the restoration are inscribed therein. We are indebted to the County Museum at Truro for copies of photographs of the interior of the church before the restoration which have been used as the basis of the line drawings.

## THE LADY CHAPEL

The wall tablet quotes "This ancient chapel was restored to the glory of God in memory of Charles Rowland Wynne de Cerjat sometime vicar of this parish by Helen Flora de Cerjat his wife. He died 29 March 1917. The altar ornaments and this tablet were given after her death 9 March 1939 to her memory by her family".

In the Lady Chapel on the north wall by the altar is what appears to be the oldest mural tablet ... "Here lyeth the body of Francis Godolphen of Treveneage Esq who was buried on the 4th day of February 1652 who married Anne the daughter of Richard Carew of Antony in Cornwall Esq by whom he had one sonne and two daughters". This is inscribed round the edge of the tablet.

Above this tablet is a full length statue clad in armour with a helmet at his feet. It was erected to the memory of Thomas, second son of John St Aubyn of Clowance. He was a colonel for the King during the Civil War.

Near to the mural tablet is a marble floor stone bearing this inscription: "Here lyeth John Seyntaubyn of Clowance Esq sonne of Thomas Seyntaubyn Esq who was buried the 15th day of September 1639; who married Katheren the daughter of John Arrundell of Trerise in Cornwall Esq by whome he had yssue five sonnes and 7 Daughters, which Katheren Also was Buried the 17th day of December Anno Domini 1629".

Other tablets reported in Polwhele and/or Lake but no longer in the church are:

1. To John Seyntaubyn (1639) and Katheren Arrundell of Trerise (1629)
2. Katheren wife of John Seyntaubyn and heiress of Francis Godolphen of Treveneage 1662
3. Sir John St Aubyn 1714

Another ancient tablet originally in the churchyard but now against the wall of the Tower Vestry has the following inscription:-  
Here lyeth the body of Richard Tregeare of this parish, Gentl. who departed this life in the fear of God the 24th day of December Anno 1668.

Why here? Why not? 'tis Holy Ground  
And bere none will my Dust Confound.  
My Saviour Lay where no one did,  
Why not a Member as his Head?  
No Quire to Sing, no Bell to Ring!  
Why Sirs! thus Buried was my King!  
My King in Joseph's Garden Lay  
Why may not I in the Church Hay?  
And that I might be Nearer yet  
I Would as He was, neer Sun set.  
I Grudge the Fashion of the day,  
To sat the Church and starve the lay,  
Though Nothing now of me be seen  
I Hope my Name and bed be Green.  
(We think this is the same Tregeare who was a member of the Crownan 1666 Seating Commission).

## THE STAINED GLASS WINDOWS

These are mostly Victorian or Edwardian in age. Starting from the south door, there is one to Nannie Bloomfield, wife of G H Johns I.C.S. died in India Jan 13 1870 aged 25. (I.C.S. — Indian Civil Service).

In the north-west corner, the window is dedicated to Henry Jenkin of Kerthen died Ap. 6 1860 aged 88.

Near the centre of the north wall is the Memorial Window featuring St Michael, St Cewenna and St George erected and dedicated to those who fell in World War I.

The next window is dedicated to William Carnsew (1799–1854) one-time leader of the choir, and given by his daughter Esther Williams in 1932.

Above the Lady Chapel altar is a window to Hender John St Aubyn Molesworth St Aubyn of Clowance who died 26 June 1868 aged 38 years.

The main altar window in the chancel is to Sir John St Aubyn, 3rd Baronet, who represented Cornwall in Parliament from 1722–1744. It was given by his descendants in 1907. Sir Robert Walpole, the Prime Minister of the time, is reported to have said of him "I know the price of every member of the House of Commons except the little Cornish baronet".

A delightful window to the north of the altar is to Caroline, wife of Rev St H Molesworth St Aubyn, daughter of Rev Charles Wheler of Ledstone Hall, Yorkshire. She gave the organ to the church in 1891, and died in Italy in 1899.

## OTHER FEATURES OF THE CHURCH

The organ was dedicated to Rev Charles Wheler and Anne his wife, by their daughter Caroline in May 1891 and details of the organ estimate are given in Appendix C.

The Chancel was restored in memory of Hender Molesworth St Aubyn B.A. of Clowance and sometime rector of Redruth, by his eldest surviving son in 1862.

Another tablet in the chancel refers to the donation to the church of the clock in the tower in loving memory of Rev St Aubyn Hender Molesworth St Aubyn of Clowance 12th baronet of Pencarrow, Cornwall, and sometime vicar of Collingham, Yorkshire, by his sons and daughters. He died in 1913. (In 1867 Lake referred to a clock in the tower but a photograph of the church about 1900–10 does not show any clock).

The present Vicar's Vestry is in memory of Helen M I Molesworth St Aubyn who died 28 March 1877 aged 72 years and dedicated by her elder surviving son in 1890.

The south aisle has obviously been added at a later date from the rest of the main church building. Lake's "Parochial History of Cornwall", published in 1867 (just before the church's restoration) states "the south aisle which has a gallery, is separated from the nave by two tall Tuscan columns of granite. This aisle and the south porch are quite out of character with the other and larger portion of the church". See the line drawing of the church about 1860. The arches today are different in appearance and age although not in general shape, to those of the north aisle. The present porch was erected in memory of Rev J W Johns (1844–89).

During the past three decades a number of additions and alterations have been made. The carpet in the chancel was laid in memory of Rev Herbert Skewes, and the curtains at the main door in memory of his greatly loved and respected daughter, Ernestine.

The reredos was beginning to deteriorate and flake. The restitution of its surface was done, and Mr Leslie Blewett of Praze removed it from its setting in the wall and repositioned it so that air could circulate around it and thus minimise the dampness that was causing the flaking. This was done in memory of Rev John Beckerlegge. Mr Blewett also made the movable centre piece for the altar rail.

The two flower stands by the altar are in memory of Mr and Mrs Herbert James. Mr James was sexton for many years and maintained the churchyard and the clock in good order. The stand for the Paschal Candle was made by Richard Walford of Praze and is in memory of Mrs Mavis Hall, daughter of Mr and Mrs James. The ciborium in use for communion services is in memory of Rev Charles Turpie, priest-in-charge in 1979. The aumbry and lamp was given in memory of Mrs Mary Corey. The table behind the altar is in memory of Mrs

Doris Cox, and the swivel light for the lectern and the visiting priest's stall is in memory of Mr George Swan. The embroidery on the altar cover has been done by Miss Elsie Dowsett, and the vase in the alcove was given by Mr Norman Clark.

## VICARS OF CROWAN

1238 Benedict  
1241 Deodatus  
1242 Sir Stephen — Chaplain of the Lord Pope  
1269 Gilbertus awarded all the altalage (altar offerings) with the sanctuary and 5s. that the vicar used to pay the Abbot.  
1310 Reginald — presented by the Jury in 1305 for beating and ill-treating William le Clerk in the St Eunius Church (Lelant)  
1315 Nicholas  
1326 Reginald le Wyta. He was vicar before this date but had become very infirm. Because of his state of "imbecillitatem et impotenciam corporis", on 26 November 1326 Sir William de Tregony was appointed as coadjutor in place of Sir Roger Ruel, priest deceased.  
1362 Paschiasius Penbro  
1403 Luke Trenewyth; but he also appears to have been vicar in 1398 when he made a complaint to the Bishop about unlawful celebration in the St Augustine Chapel at Binnerton. He certainly paid the clerical subsidy in 1410.  
1414 Thomas Rosuyk  
1415 John Symon  
1449 Sir Henry Woven (or Wewene). While vicar in 1449 he served as a juror in an enquiry at Camborne.  
1459 Sir Richard Benne  
Sir Richard Hoper  
1512 Radolphus Trelobys. Later he was Canon of Glasney (a famous place of learning at Penryn). He may also have been vicar of Newlyn in 1523. In 1539 the Abbey of Tewkesbury was suppressed. In 1546 Thomas Seyntaubyn purchased the patronage but see below the appointment of benedict Tyracke and Henry Tirack. In 1549 the English Prayer Book was introduced and this was greatly resented in Cornwall. The Council of Edward VI confiscated all the church silver in the County in 1553 but later Queen Mary ordered it to be restored (...to Crowyne, 3 chalices and patens 29 oz., a crosse of silver 50 oz., a lyttel crewtt of silver 2 oz.)  
1557 Henry Tiracke.  
1583 Benedict Tyracke — Patron the Queen.  
1595 Henry Tirack — Patron the Queen. He is reported as vicar in 1630. Little is known of Crowan during the Civil War. John St Aubyn of Clowance was a Parliamentarian and a Colonel in the Roundhead army but Thomas, his

brother, was a Colonel in the King's army. Henry Seyntaubyn was certainly vicar in 1666 when the commission was appointed to decide on the seating in the church.

1699 John Glynn. He was also mentioned in 1708 and buried in Helston 1731.  
1731 Ebenezer Williams. Canon Doble names him as Ezekiel, but in a written terrier (list of church property) of 1746 he signs as Ebenezer.  
1777 William Robinson; non-resident, living at Nansloe in Wendron, and no curate was appointed. By 1812 Rev John Lewis was appointed curate. In 1821 Mr W Grylls was curate.  
1828 William Grylls.  
1835 John Molesworth — authorised by royal licence to assume the name of St Aubyn in addition to Molesworth.  
1844 John White Johns worked very hard to restore the church culminating in the restoration of 1871/2 (see monument in the north aisle). He also built the "new" vicarage, now called Trenoweth House, replacing Glebe Farm.  
1890 Rowland de Cerjat — Belfry restored and organ built (see Appendices B and C) and Vestry organ chamber built.  
1904 Arthur Adams; Hon. Canon of Truro Cathedral. Memorial window and extension to the churchyard.  
1926 Herbert John Skewes. Restoration of Lady Chapel.  
1954 John Edward Beckerlegge. A "new" vicarage was built in the field next to the Victorian vicarage. He was Rural Dean for a few years, and a noted ornithologist.  
1979 Charles Turpie. He sadly died only a few months after being appointed priest-in-charge of the new united benefice of Crowan with Godolphin.  
1981 Derek Baldwin. Another "new" vicarage was built in Trethannas Gardens, Praze, just before his appointment.  
1984 Robert Frederick Law. Appointed Rural Dean in 1990. As the present churchyard was almost full, he arranged for a new part to be taken over. Interior changes to the church.  
1992 Philip Douglass

Churchwardens since 1891 (some of whom have held office more than once): Rev St Aubyn H Molesworth St Anbyn, Mr W H Thomas, Mr A Rowe, Mr R Edwards, Sir Hugh Molesworth St Anbyn, Mr H Thomas, Mr J H Lawrence, Mr A Rowe, Mr R H Edwards, Mr R J Thomas, Mr J Sarah Roberts, Mr G H Blair, Mr E Hosking, Mr W P Trewella, Mr R E Bourdeaux, Mr A W Ridgewell, Mr D L C Roberts, Mr R Jenkin, Mr R Luke, Mrs H K Lay, Mr W Hill, Mr P Williams, Mr J Roberts, Mr M Buckby, Mr C Smales.  
Present churchwardens (in 1997) are Mr G Corrall and Mrs A Gluyas-Morrish.

## APPENDIX A

*Balance Sheet up to February 1874 (for the Restoration Fund)*

Subscriptions	1530	10	6	To Sarah & Edwards	1723	11	0
Sundries include sale of materials of old church, mausoleum, teas etc	496	3	6	Sarah & Roberts (pulpit and screen)	43	0	0
				Piers St Aubyn (Architect)	81	0	0
				Heating apparatus	50	0	0
				Messrs Pool (lead on tower)	5	11	0
				Messrs Williams (Helston) bell repairs	1	5	6
				Sundries	118	1	2
				Balance forward	4	5	4
	<b>£2026</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>0</b>		<b>£2026</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>0</b>

Total mount of contract work done by Messrs Sarah & Edwards  
Architect's commission

Paid to Messrs Sarah & Edwards	2013	3	0
Balance due	120	0	0
	2133	3	0
	1867	11	6
	<b>£265</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>6</b>

### *List of Donors for the Restoration in 1872*

Rev St A M St Aubyn (Patron)	827	4	6
Duke of Leeds	200	0	0
Sir Edward St Aubyn	100	0	0
Mrs Molesworth St Aubyn	50	0	0
Rev J W Johns	50	0	0
John Abraham (Churchwarden)	50	0	0
Lord Churston	35	0	0
Mrs Pendarves	30	0	0
Mr Walter St Aubyn	10	0	0
Mr Wingfield Digby	10	0	0
Mr Hodgson	10	0	0
Mr William Sarah (Churchwarden)	10	0	0
and many other donors of sums ranging from £5 to 10/-	97	5	6
	<b>£1479</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>-</b>

## APPENDIX B

This bill is undated but is most probably in connection with the work done in 1900 in the church and churchyard.

### *Dr to Henry Thomas Builder & Contractor April 19—*

Cart work done by farmers	s.	d.
Dec		
Skewes	7 hrs @ 9d per hour	5 3
Lawrance (Borthog)	7 hrs @ 9d	5 3
Eva (Hallegan)	7 hrs @ 9d	5 3
Temby — load of lime		3 0
C Roberts (Crenver)	8 hrs @ 9d	6 0
Davis	7 hrs @ 9d	5 3
Temby	4 hrs @ 9d	3 0
Jan		
Walter Thomas	6½ hrs @ 9d	4 10½
John Williams — load of lime		3 3
Eva (Hallegan)	7½ hrs @ 9d	5 7½
W Roberts (Carn) — load of sand		2 9
A J Walters	6 hrs @ 9d	4 6
Corey (Releath)	6 hrs @ 9d	4 6
March		
Gluyas (Releath) 2 loads of sand		5 6
H Thomas (Tregear)	8 hrs @ 9d	6 0
John Williams (Tremaine)	3 hrs @ 5d	1 3
	<b>£3</b>	<b>11</b>
		<b>3</b>

## APPENDIX C

### *Organ Estimate (1890)*

Brewer & Co., 95 & 97 Pydar Street, Truro.

Number 3 specification and Estimate.

Great organ — 56 notes; specification of each note.

Swell organ, Pedal organ, 2 Composition pedals to Great and 2 to Swell; 2½ Oct. of pedals.

Spotted metal front, everything of the best material and workmanship as per No. 1 specification

Price £265 nett.

Specification and estimate for finishing the organ in Crowan Church. Prices include carriage, voicing, fixing, finishing and tuning in church.

CC Cornopean on swell	£20	0	0
Cello on pedals	21	10	0
Tenor & clarinet on great	10	0	0
Harmonic piccolo on swell	5	0	0
	£56	10	0

If the cornopea is left out and a celeste or angelica put in its place, it will cost £5 less. This is a separate price for enlarging the swell sound board and adding a celeste or angelica in addition to the other stops £17 10 0

## APPENDIX D

*Commission appointed by Seth, Bishop of Exeter, in 1666. Crowan Church seating.*

Henry Seyntaubyn, John Seyntaubyn, John Seyntaubyn, William Orchard, Rich Fowler, Rich Fowler junr., Richard Tregeare, J W Rogers; John Hoaisne, W Coath—churchwardens.

A total of 160 seats allocated by name to each place plus whatever number was involved in the St Aubyn group of seats.

One presumes that children would sit with their mothers although no mention is made of them.

The commission has provided us with the names of many families in the parish although it cannot be assumed to be complete since some would not or could not go to church.

"By virtue of ye Commission herunto annexed wee the Commissioners whose names are subscribed upon view & examinacon have seated ye INHABITANTS of ye said parish as order followeth"

Eastern end

People placed in ye South Ille

J StA & family	2M	2M	2M	6M
St Aubyn friends etc	2M	Minister	2M	6M
St Aubyn servants etc	3W	2W	2W by pulpit	6M
St Aubyn servants etc	2W	2W	2W	8M
St Aubyn servants etc	3W	3W	2W	9M
St Aubyn servants etc	4W	3W	3W	

3M	3W	Font	3W	5W
3M	8W			3W
3M	7W			3W
3M	8W			3W
3M	6W			3W
3M	5M			3W

The exact position of "ye South Ille" where most of the men were seated is not known

## APPENDIX E

The following information is included as general interest although not strictly concerning the church.

"A correct statement of the number of houses, families and individuals in the parish of Crownan in the year 1831.

Inhabited houses	773
By how many families occupied	820
Houses building	11
Other houses uninhabited	60
Families chiefly employed in agriculture	141
Families chiefly employed in trade, manufactures, handicraft	59
All other families	620
Number of males	2133
Number of females	2199
Total number of persons	4332
Male servants upwards of 20 years old	4
Female servants upwards of 20 years old	79
Total number of males not 20 years old	1120
Total number of males 20 or more years old	930
Occupiers of land employing labourers	39
Occupiers of land not employing labourers	74
Labourers employed in agriculture	95
Males employed in retail trade or in handicrafts as masters or workmen	65
Wholesale merchants, capitalists, bankers, professional and other educated men	2
Labourers employed by the 3 preceding classes and in other labour not agriculture	615
All other males (except servants) 20 years old including retired tradesmen, superannuated labourers, diseased or disabled in body or mind	36"

This is an extract from the census returns for 1831.